

29th Sunday In Ordinary Time, Year B

Isaiah 53:10-11

10The Lord was pleased to crush him in infirmity. If he gives his life as an offering for sin, he shall see his descendants in a long life, and the will of the Lord shall be accomplished through him.

11Because of his affliction he shall see the light in fullness of days; through his suffering, By full union with a suffering people.² **my servant shall justify many,** This includes all of us!³ **and their guilt he shall bear.** He will share his own goodness with them and thus fulfill all divine promises. Although the servant's innocence separates him from the rest of Israel, he always identifies himself with his sorrowful fellow men. His divine gifts become their means to salvation.²

The suffering servant of course is Jesus. And every word of Isaiah's majestic account of what was to happen some five hundred years later on Calvary reminds all of us that God has not left us to suffer alone. God has stepped into history, our history. We have sinned, but it is God who suffers with us, and for us.¹

Hebrews 4: 14-16

Here we begin the section of the book of Hebrews, which discusses how Christ, our high priest, is greater than the priests of the Mosaic Law. Our confidence is based on Christ's high priesthood. He is the perfect priest because He is merciful and compassionate. As man, He has experienced the sufferings that affect us, although He was free from sin. Since He knows our weaknesses so well, He can give us the help we need, and when He comes to judge us, He will take that weakness into account. We should respond to the Lord's goodness by staying true to our profession of faith. A Christian needs to live up to all the demands of his calling: he should be single-minded and free from doubts.²

Brothers and sisters:

14Since we have a great high priest This is the only place in the Letter where Jesus is designated a "great" high priest. Usually, the author refers to Him as "high priest" or simply "priest". Here the designation indicates his superiority over the Jewish high priest, with whom the sacred writer constantly compares him.² **who has passed through the heavens,** Christ ascended into the most intimate presence of God in heaven. Jewish tradition sometimes speaks of multiple levels of heaven.⁵ **Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.** This confession is "Jesus is Lord". Jesus is mediator of the New Covenant just as Moses was of the old. He is High Priest like the priests of the Old Covenant prior to the golden calf and the creation of the Aaronite and Levitical priesthood.²

15For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. These testings (temptations) did not occur only once (see Matthew 4:1-11 for the temptation in the desert) but were a constant accompaniment of his life. The only difference is that Jesus never succumbed to His temptations; unlike His followers.² The believers were at that time in a storm of temptation; that is why the Apostle is consoling them, saying that our high priest not only knows, as God, the weakness of our nature: as man, he has also experienced the sufferings that affect us, although he was free from sin. Since he knows our weakness so well, he can give us the help we need, and when he comes to judge us, he will take that weakness into account in his sentence.⁵

16So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help. Through the salvation worked by Christ, the compassionate Priest and intercessor, God's throne has become a judgment seat from which mercy flows. Christ's priesthood did not cease to operate with his death; it continues in heaven, where he forever pleads on our behalf, and therefore we should have confident recourse to him.⁵

Mark 10:35-45

35 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said to him, Along with Peter they were the inner circle among the disciples. These three were the only ones present at the transfiguration, at the raising of Jairus' daughter, and in the garden of Gethsemane. They should have known better than to make this request.² "Teacher," we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."

36 He replied, "What do you wish me to do for you?"

37 They answered him, "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left." These are the places of honor when the messiah presides at the messianic banquet.²

38 Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink The image of the cup is suffering and death. In Jesus' case this is the third cup of the Passover meal, the cup of blessing, which started his passion—and the fourth cup, the cup of completion, which was drunk on the cross (the sour wine) which ended his passion.² or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

39 They said to him, "We can." This answer is full of irony considering their subsequent cowardice during the passion, although James was later martyred (Acts 12:2)² Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; To be drowned by calamities or to be immersed in the fire of God's judgment.⁴

40 but to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give Jesus can only point out the way to glory by his own death; only God can bestow that glory, at least until Jesus has received the full measure of his Messianic authority through his resurrection.⁽⁴⁾ but is for those for whom it has been prepared."

41 When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John.

42 Jesus summoned them and said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt.

43 But, it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great The disciples are to reverse the customary practice whereby those in authority rule by force; their new norm of conduct—to be the servant of all—is made possible by Jesus' own mission of service.⁽⁴⁾ among you will be your servant;

44 whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. Even more humble than a servant.²

45 For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. This clause, patterned on Is. 53:10-12, specifies the meaning of Jesus' service as an atoning death for all men. The rarity with which Jesus describes his mission in terms of Is. 53, and the fact that these texts are found only in the Marcan source, has led Jeremias to suppose that Jesus confided his revelations only to his closest disciples.⁴ Since the golden calf, the Israelites have been the slaves of God. They have been unable to approach God without an animal sacrifice. Now, through Jesus' sacrifice, we are no longer slaves but sons of God (Romans 8:15-17).²

Our attitude should be that of our Lord; we should seek to serve God and men with a truly supernatural outlook, not expecting any return. We should serve even those who do not appreciate the service we do them. This doesn't make any sense if judged by human standards but the Christian identified with Christ takes pride in serving others—by doing so he shares in Christ's mission. If Jesus is truly King, then we must be His willing servants, willingly doing His bidding.²

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken e³ Marie Finn, (2) The St. Paul Center For Biblical Theology Online Founded By Dr. Scott Hahn, (3) "Workbook For Lectors And Gospel Readers 1991" by Graziano Marcheschi with Nancy Seitz Marcheschi, (4) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary", and (5) "The Navarre Bible: Hebrews" with commentary by members of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Navarre.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled this commentary.